Please amend the above-identified application as follows:

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please replace the previous version of the claims with the following clean version, wherein claims 1, 2, 3, 6, and 12-14 incorporate new amendments thereto, and claim 15 has been added.

1. (Once Amended) A hollow rack shaft which is formed cylindrically by bending a substantially rectangular plate so that parallel two sides of the rectangular plate are joined, wherein in a part of a surface of the rectangular plate a row of rack teeth is formed along a direction of an axis of the rectangular plate, and wherein:

said sides of the rectangular plate that are joined each has complementary profiles composed of a continuation of a convex portion and a concave portion so that the sides are engaged when they are joined.

2. (Once Amended) A hollow rack shaft according to Claim 1, wherein:

a width of a part having a largest width of said convex portion is larger than a width of a part having a smallest width of said concave such that said sides are prevented from being detached.

3. (Once Amended) A hollow rack shaft according to Claim 1, wherein:

said convex portion and said concave portion mutually opposite are caulked such that mutual gap is removed.

4. A method of manufacturing a hollow rack shaft which is formed cylindrically by bending the opposite sides of a substantially rectangular plate so that the sides are joined and in a part of the surface of which a row of rack teeth along a direction of the axis is formed, wherein:

a complementary profile composed of the continuation of a convex portion and a concave portion is provided to said respective sides; and

the respective sides are joined owing to this profile when they are confronted so that they are not detached.

5. A method of manufacturing a hollow rack shaft according to Claim 4, wherein:

further, said convex portion and/or said concave portion of said joined sides are/is caulked to deform the boundary.

6. (Once Amended) A hollow rack shaft which is formed cylindrically by bending a substantially rectangular plate so that parallel two sides of the rectangular plate are joined, wherein in a part of a surface of the rectangular plate a row of rack teeth is formed along a direction of an axis of the rectangular plate, and wherein:

said plate comprises a first plate for a rack teeth area provided where said row of rack teeth is to be formed and a second plate for an area other than the rack teeth area.

7. A hollow rack shaft according to Claim 6, wherein:

said first plate is thicker than said second plate.

8. A hollow rack shaft according to Claim 6, wherein:

said first plate is made of material more satisfactory in hardenability than that of said second plate.

9. A method of manufacturing a hollow rack shaft provided a row of rack teeth along a direction of the axis in a part of the surface for forming a substantially rectangular plate cylindrically by bending it so that the parallel two sides are joined, wherein:

said plate is one plate acquired by welding a first plate for a rack teeth area for said row of rack teeth to be formed and a second plate for an area except it.

10. A method of manufacturing a hollow rack shaft according to Claim 9, wherein:

said first plate is thicker than said second plate.

11. A method of manufacturing a hollow rack shaft according to Claim 9, wherein:

said first plate is made of material more satisfactory in hardenability than that of said second plate.

12. (Once Amended) A hollow rack shaft which is formed cylindrically by bending a plate so that two sides of the plate are joined, wherein in a part of a surface of

the plate a row of rack teeth is formed along a direction of an axis of the plate, and wherein:

said rack shaft is provided with a first area and second areas on both sides of said first area;

wherein in said first area, the row of rack teeth and a semi-cylindrical part on a reverse side of the row of rack teeth are formed; and

in said second areas, a complete cylindrical part is formed and at least one of the second areas has a diameter different from a diameter of the semi-cylindrical part in said first area.

13. (Once Amended) A hollow rack shaft according to Claim 12, wherein:

a diameter of at least one of said second areas is smaller than a diameter of said first area.

14. (Once Amended) A method of manufacturing a hollow rack shaft which is provided with a first area and a second area on both sides of it, in which in said first area, a row of rack teeth and a semi-cylindrical part on the reverse side are formed and in which in said two second areas, a complete cylindrical part is formed and at least one of the second areas has a diameter different from the diameter of the semi-cylindrical part in said first area, wherein:

a plate provided with a part with first width having width corresponding to the first area for said row of rack teeth to be formed and a part with second width corresponding to said second area and having narrower width than said part with the first width is plastically deformed cylindrically.

15. (New) A hollow rack shaft according to Claim 6, wherein said first plate is welded to said second plate.